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Seventh session

SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA OF THE SEVENTH
REGULAR SESSION: ITEM PROPOSED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Explanatory memorandum by the Secretary-General

1. The question of a rather extensive reorganization of the Secretariat was the subject of some discussion at the sixth session of the General Assembly. The second report of 1951 of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions^{1/} drew attention to the administrative problems arising from the continued separation of the activities of the Departments of Economic Affairs and of Social Affairs in view of the establishment of the Technical Assistance Administration. In the debates on the budget in the Fifth Committee a number of delegations expressed doubts as to the soundness of the present administrative structure of the Secretariat and requested the Secretary-General to consider the matter of a revision of the structure and to report to the General Assembly.

2. In response to these expressions of views, the Secretary-General stated^{2/}:

"The Secretary-General believes that it would be both premature and impracticable to deal with re-organization of economic and social affairs and technical assistance at this session of the Assembly and in isolation from other problems. If the Fifth Committee desires that these questions be dealt with, the Secretary-General would propose that he should prepare a study of the desirability of general re-organization of the Secretariat, for submission to the next session of the Assembly through the

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1/ A/1853, Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Supplement No. 7.

2/ A/C.5/L.111

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RETURN TO CIA
LIBRARY/Advisory
A/2214

A/2214
English
Page 2

Advisory Committee. If the Committee should desire that this be done, it may be appropriate to insert this statement in your Rapporteur's report".

3. The report of the Fifth Committee to the General Assembly^{3/} incorporated an Egyptian proposal constituting a recommendation of the Committee which read in part as follows:

"Requests the Secretary-General to review the whole structure and functions of the three Departments of the Secretariat, as well as the system of co-ordination between them, within the context of a wider re-organization referred to in the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/L.III), and to submit his recommendations through the Advisory Committee, together with the comments of that Committee, to the General Assembly at its seventh regular session".

4. The Secretary-General submits the following statement in accordance with this recommendation and has placed the item on the supplementary list for the agenda of the seventh session. While the bulk of the statement deals with the re-organization of the Secretariat, it also considers briefly certain features relating to those organs set up by the General Assembly which are intimately concerned with the administration of the United Nations.

5. Seven years have passed since the Preparatory Commission developed the plans under which the work of the United Nations was originally organized and conducted. Those plans were well conceived for the initial period of the Organization's life.

6. On the basis of those plans, with a few modifications, the various organs of the United Nations have been brought into active being. The physical problems of buildings and equipment have been solved, methods of work have been developed, and personnel have been found and trained to carry out the varied and, in some cases, unprecedented tasks for which the United Nations calls.

1/ A/2022, Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Annexes, agenda item 41, page 75.

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A/2214
English
Page 3

7. Continued attention must, of course, be given to improving further existing working methods and procedures, and to ensuring increased efficiency in administration.
8. In the future, however, greater emphasis must be laid on questions of over-all policy, on planning and balancing programmes of work, and on guiding and appraising the execution of work programmes.
9. These are difficult and delicate tasks. The possibilities of useful work which the United Nations could conceivably undertake are almost infinite, and the resources available are, of necessity, extremely limited in comparison. The resulting problems of selection and of formulating a coherent plan of action in order to accomplish the maximum with the resources available, demand the best combined efforts of the General Assembly and its Committees, the Councils and Commissions, and also the Secretariat.
10. The Secretary-General believes that, in order to cope most effectively with these tasks, the structure of the Secretariat should be simplified and its functioning improved, and the lines of responsibility more clearly defined within the Secretariat as well as between the Secretariat and other organs.

1. ORGANIZATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

11. A primary task in the early years of the United Nations was to perfect the organization and functioning of the individual departments of the Secretariat. This has, in the main, been accomplished under the effective leadership of the Assistant Secretaries-General. Each of them has rendered notable service in the organization of his department. While certain adjustments still remain to be made, it is a matter of gratification that the budgets of the departments have been stabilized and the work-loads efficiently adapted to available financial resources.
12. It has been apparent for some time, however, that what will be needed in the future is more suitable means for co-ordination between various departments in related fields and for top-level policy consideration of general problems. Eight Assistant Secretaries-General, plus a Director-General of Technical Assistance, is too large a number either to act as a co-ordinating group

/or to work

A/2214
English
Page 4

or to work intimately with the Secretary-General in the consideration and formulation of policy.

13. An important consequence of the present structure is that special arrangements have had to be made to co-ordinate matters affecting more than one department. Thus, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, which has the general responsibility of assisting the Secretary-General in the over-all co-ordination of the work of the Secretariat, has had a special responsibility in regard to the co-ordination of the Departments of Economic Affairs and of Social Affairs with each other and with the specialized agencies. Co-ordination of activities in relation to missions, and to special bodies such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Korean Relief Agency and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, has also thrown a burden on the Executive Office.

14. The Secretary-General believes that many advantages would result from the introduction of a simplified scheme in which three Deputy Secretaries-General would replace the present Assistant Secretaries-General and more responsibility for day-to-day administration would be delegated to the Principal Director. The main features of the plan would be:

(a) To enable the Secretary-General to devote his entire energies to the most important problems of policy and programme formulation, by freeing him from questions of day-to-day operation, administration and co-ordination.

(b) To provide the Secretary-General with a small group of deputies of the highest competence and prestige to collaborate with him. Although these persons should each be responsible for the functioning of a part of the Secretariat, so as to ensure that their policy considerations would be rooted in reality, their main duty would be the development and over-all co-ordination of policies and programmes.

(c) To delegate through the Deputy Secretaries-General to the next supervisory level (Principal Directors) the maximum responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the several areas of the Secretariat.

/(d) Through

A/2214
English
Page 5

(d) Through the rational grouping of activities, to lessen the need for special co-ordinating arrangements, or for questions to be referred for solution to the Deputy Secretaries-General or to the Secretary-General.

Grouping of activities

15. Under the proposed new scheme, the present departmental structure would in general be maintained, and the departments grouped under the Deputy Secretaries-General as follows:

Deputy for Political and Public Affairs:

Department of Political and Security Council Affairs;
Department of Trusteeship and Information from
Non-Self-Governing Territories;

Department of Public Information.

Deputy for Economic and Social Affairs:

Department of Economic Affairs;

Department of Social Affairs;

Technical Assistance Administration.

Deputy for Administrative and Conference Services:

Administrative and Financial Services;

Conference and General Services;

Library.

Apart from these groups, there would be an Office of Legal Affairs, reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

16. Certain adjustments would, however, be desirable, including the devolution of some responsibilities from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the alignment of other responsibilities between the Deputy Secretaries-General and the departments, and the rearrangements of certain activities between and within departments.

17. A chart indicating the proposed lines of organization is appended (annex A).

Executive Office of the Secretary-General

18. With the establishment of a Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, a part of the functions of the Office of the Director of

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A/2214

English

Page 6

Co-ordination for Specialized Agencies and Economic and Social Matters and a portion of the staff could be transferred to this Deputy from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. It should also be possible to curtail other activities at present carried out in the Executive Office in connexion with intra-Secretariat co-ordination and to transfer or re-assign some of the staff.

19. The Library, which reports directly to the Executive Office, could be supervised by the Deputy Secretary-General for Administrative and Conference Services.

20. The Executive Assistant and the personal assistants of the Secretary-General, a small staff to co-ordinate the work of the General Assembly, and the Protocol and Liaison Section would remain in the Executive Office.

21. The Secretary-General considers that the staff of his Executive Office deserves high praise for the way in which it has handled the almost overwhelming burdens thrown upon it under the present organizational arrangements. He hopes that the smaller staff remaining under the new scheme would be able to give the Secretary-General all the assistance necessary in regard to matters of policy and co-ordination as well as general external relations.

Office of Legal Affairs

22. The Legal Department is the smallest of the departments. It furnishes legal advice and services to all the other units of the Secretariat, and is carrying forward the work being done in the field of the development of international law. It also has a special relationship to the Secretary-General. In view of the small size of the Legal Department it does not seem advisable to maintain it as a departmental entity, and in view of the other factors mentioned it could not appropriately be associated with a single Deputy. The Department might therefore be redesignated as the Office of Legal Affairs, reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

23. The following departments, each under a Principal Director, would be placed under this Deputy, who would also assume the Secretary-General's

responsibilities for the Military Staff Committee:

Political and Security Council Affairs;

Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories;

Public Information.

24. Although it is not proposed that any further changes should be made at the time of the initial transfer, a study should subsequently be made of the following questions:

(a) Further co-ordination of the "area" functions of the three departments;

(b) The advantages (if any) of consolidating services common to two or more Councils, Commissions and Committees;

(c) The transfer to the respective services of the Secretariat of the language and document activities (and staff) of the Military Staff Committee, and the amalgamation of its remaining activities with Political and Security Council Affairs.

Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

25. The close inter-relationship between economic and social factors is increasingly apparent in international as well as national life. From the time of the inception of the United Nations, the need for this inter-relationship was recognized in the creation of the Economic and Social Council. Although the Preparatory Commission recommended separate departments for economic affairs and social affairs, this was done with some misgivings and the need was stressed for co-ordination arrangements between these departments, especially in the field of statistics, and in regard to relationships with the Council and the specialized agencies.

26. In line with these recommendations, a joint division was established almost immediately to serve the Economic and Social Council and for the co-ordination of relations with specialized agencies. Subsequently, part of the staff dealing with the specialized agencies was transferred to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. When the Technical Assistance Administration was established, efforts were made to ensure a close inter-relationship between that Administration, the Departments of Economic Affairs

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A/2214
English
Page 8

and of Social Affairs, and the specialized agencies co-operating in the same fields.

27. A good measure of success has, in fact, been achieved in ensuring co-ordination of the economic, social and technical assistance activities within the United Nations Secretariat, and with the specialized agencies, the Technical Assistance Board and other bodies. Still more effective co-ordination, with some economy of staff and effort, could be achieved by concentrating these responsibilities in the charge of a Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

28. Under this Deputy would be the Departments of Economic and of Social Affairs and the Technical Assistance Administration, together with such other staff as might be transferred from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Under this arrangement, there would be certain advantages in having the secretariat of the Economic and Social Council (now in the Department of Economic Affairs) and the Specialized Agency Section (perhaps re-united with the secretariat of the Council), reporting to the Deputy Secretary-General. This arrangement, if made, should be watched closely to ensure that it did not burden the Deputy Secretary-General with too much detail.

Deputy Secretary-General for Administrative and Conference Services

29. Under the Deputy Secretary-General for Administrative and Conference Services would fall the activities at present carried out in Administrative and Financial Services, Conference and General Services and the Library. The completion of the work of the Headquarters Planning Office would also be in his charge. With a common supervision of these activities, some modification of the existing departmental organisation would become possible and would be desirable. The following arrangement is suggested:

Administrative and Financial Services (excluding Buildings

Management, as proposed in the 1953 budget estimates);

Documents (present COS Bureau of Documents);

General Services (present COS Bureau of General Services, including

Buildings Management as proposed in the 1953 budget estimates)

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A/2214
English
Page 9

Note: (could also be called Buildings and Supply Services)

Library;

Headquarters construction activities (until completed).

Staffing of the Offices of the Deputy Secretaries-General

30. In order to secure the full benefits of the proposed plan, it would be necessary to appoint Deputy Secretaries-General of the highest level of competence, and to provide compensation commensurate with their experience and responsibilities. The Secretary-General believes that for the specially-qualified type of person he has in mind it would be appropriate to provide a salary of \$20,000 net (\$33,000 gross), housing accommodation (approximately \$5,000), an allowance of \$10,000 and an automobile.

31. Each of the Deputies would need a small staff, including perhaps:

- 1 Principal Officer
- 1 First Officer
- 1 Secretary (senior)
- 2 Secretarial and clerical personnel (intermediate).

Administrative and financial implications

32. With the introduction of the new scheme, it should be possible to decrease the number of posts in the Secretariat by about thirty. Although small staffs would be required for the three Deputy Secretaries-General, as mentioned above, immediate reductions could be made in the present offices of the Assistant Secretaries-General. This would immediately result in a saving of about \$320,000 gross, or about \$300,000 after application of the staff assessment plan.

33. Even more important economies should be possible later as the new organization achieves its objectives of programme simplification and co-ordination. Results would be realized in part in a reduction of expenditure, and perhaps even more in an increased effectiveness of performance.

Other administrative problems

34. The relationships between departments at Headquarters and the various offices and missions away from Headquarters should be maintained for the

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W/2214
English
Page 10

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time being on the present basis, which has proved generally satisfactory. When the lines of the new organization have been clarified, the relationships between Headquarters and the field should be reviewed in order to determine whether any adjustments should be made.

35. Similarly, existing arrangements for the conduct of administrative services within each department should be re-examined in due course to see if centralization could be achieved within the province of each Deputy without making excessive demands on his time for dealing with administrative questions.

36. Finally, the present intra-Secretariat committee structure should be reviewed with a view to eliminating extra-departmental co-ordinating arrangements or reducing the time spent on them.

37. If the General Assembly concurs in the general lines of the scheme now proposed, the Secretary-General suggests that he should be authorized to work out further details and to present to the eighth session of the General Assembly the budget estimates for 1954 based on the new plan of organization.

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SECRETARIAT AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

38. Certain aspects of the relationship between the Secretariat and the General Assembly should also be re-examined, in the light of their respective functions. The Secretary-General believes that confusion has arisen from the dual status of some members of agencies of the General Assembly - in particular the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Administrative Tribunal.

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

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39. ~~The members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions~~ are chosen by the General Assembly in their individual capacities, and should not be influenced by the views of their respective governments. Some of the Committee members also represent their governments, as representatives or as advisers, in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, where they may act as advocates for the Advisory Committee, or may argue and vote against its recommendations. This situation would seem to be a source of confusion to the General Assembly, and not in keeping with its intentions when it established the Advisory Committee as a group of individual experts.

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A/201-
English
Page 11

40. It would appear to be desirable that membership in the Advisory Committee should disqualify a person from service as a member or alternate in the Fifth Committee. The advisory Committee would, of course, continue to be represented in the Fifth Committee by its Chairman.

Committee on Contributions

41. The Committee on Contributions is also composed of persons elected in their individual capacities, some of whom also serve as governmental representatives in the Fifth Committee. The functions of the Committee differ from those of the Advisory Committee or of the Administrative Tribunal, as the first named Committee is exclusively a legislative body and is not concerned with administration. It may be that its present composition gives the Committee on Contributions greater freedom and flexibility in the formulation of proposals for the Fifth Committee. In any case, the Secretary-General does not wish to offer any proposal regarding that Committee.

Administrative Tribunal

42. The administration of the Secretariat is conducted under the Staff Regulations enacted by the General Assembly and the rules prescribed by the Secretary-General in accordance therewith. The application of these regulations and rules is to an increasing extent affected by the interpretations given to them by the Administrative Tribunal in the decisions handed down by it in cases brought by staff members. The number of cases brought before the Tribunal has continued to increase, and is likely to be substantially greater in 1953 and 1954 than in the preceding years.

43. The work of the Tribunal has important consequences for the Organization. Its decisions have an effect on the process of personnel administration, as well as significant legal effects on the regulations and rules. The operation of the Tribunal and the awards rendered by it have had increasing financial implications in respect to the budget. It should also be noted that the expectation that the specialized agencies would enter into agreements to utilize the Tribunal has not been realized. A number of important questions still remain unclarified, notably the relation of the Tribunal's jurisdiction to the decisions of the Pension Board, and the Assembly's intention regarding the making of financial provisions for the payment of awards.

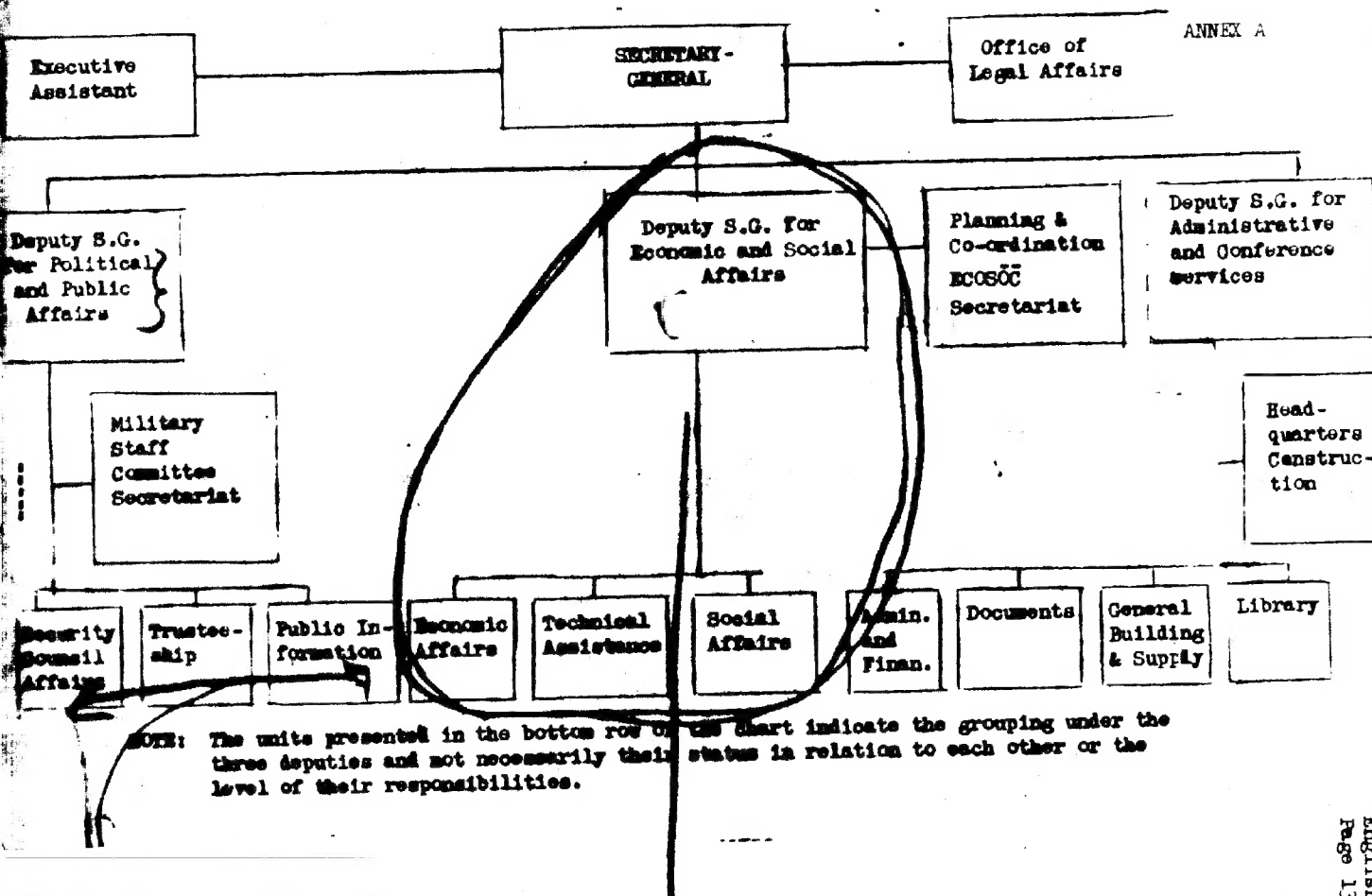
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A/2214
English
page 12

44. As in the case of the Advisory Committee, membership on the Tribunal should, the Secretary-General believes, disqualify a person from service as a governmental representative on legislative committees, as otherwise an undesirable mixture of judicial and legislative functions would result.

45. Any consideration of the future administration of the United Nations must therefore take into account the place of the Administrative Tribunal in the total administrative structure. The Secretary-General suggests that it would be advisable for the General Assembly to envisage the creation of a small committee to examine this matter and to report to the next regular session of the Assembly.

/ANNEX A



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A/2214
English
Page 13